



The Hon Julie Bishop MP

Minister for Education, Science and Training

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues



Media Centre

Media Release

The Australian History Summit

Communiqué

17 August 2006

The Australian History Summit participants:

- consider the study of Australian History should be sequentially planned through primary and secondary schooling and should be a distinct subject in Years 9 and 10. This would be an essential and required core part of all students' learning experience to prepare them for the 21st Century;
- welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of an annual Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History;
- affirm the importance of the study of Australian History in schools. Australia's history is longer than that of many European countries, and is in many ways unique. Australia is one of the world's oldest, continuous democracies. A knowledge of our history is therefore vital. Nearly all of the crucial public debates embody and appeal to history. We are convinced of the urgent need for a nation wide revival in the teaching of Australian History and its global, environmental and social contexts. We urge that steps be taken to enlist all States and Territories and relevant authorities in the task;
- recognise that there is no intention to create a single "official" history, but rather to ensure students learn that the study of history encompasses multiple perspectives;
- agree that the approach to Australian History in schools needs to be:

Teachable, in that it engages students and teachers;

Do-able, with a specific and appropriate allocation of time within the school curriculum; and

Sustainable, addressing the range of interest and circumstances in the education

systems of Australia.

- endorse three key principles by which the approach should be developed:
 - an emphasis on the significant public events and developments that have taken place in Australia and its regions, or that concern Australia;
 - recognition of the global environment in which the development of Australia has taken place; and
 - focus on the everyday experience of people living in Australia 50 or 100 or 200 or 20,000 years ago.
- agree that students should come to an understanding of the character of Australian society by pursuing over a range of years, a series of open-ended questions about the character of Australia's society based on a clear chronology of events;
- agree that in addition to pursuing a range of open-ended questions, development of history study needs to be firmly based on a clear chronological sequence of key events spanning Indigenous presence to recent decades;
- agree that this would lead to the development of a model curriculum for the study of Australian History based on sound principles of historical literacy. Such a curriculum needs to be supported by quality curriculum resources, professional learning for teachers and national profile events such as Australian History Week in schools;
- acknowledge the contribution by the authors of the papers prepared for the Summit;
- ask that two further tasks be undertaken:

The development of a series of open-ended questions to guide further curriculum developments

The development of a chronological framework of key events.

- Urge Commonwealth and State Education Ministers to pursue the goals set out in this communiqué.

<http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2006/08/b002170806.asp>